

Committee on Resources,

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife & Oceans

[fisheries](#) - - Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6232 - - (202) 226-0200

Chairman's Statement

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE WAYNE T. GILCHREST, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS AT THE HEARING ON THE HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1998, AND OTHER NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE PROGRAMS: SEPTEMBER 13, 2001

Today the Subcommittee will be hearing testimony on the reauthorization of the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998. As the former Chairman of the Coast Guard Subcommittee, I am particularly interested in hearing about how NOAA's updated navigation services program fits into the broader Marine Transportation System initiative.

Congress enacted the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act to help provide the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with a framework for the modernization of the United States nautical charting, tide and current and geodetic programs. Since the Act became law, significant progress has been made modernizing those programs largely through Congressional additions to NOAA's budget request.

Despite the progress that has been made, much work remains to be done, and it is of great concern to the Subcommittee that NOAA has still not been able to put together a long term plan for maintaining its hydrographic expertise. The agency was tasked to prepare such a plan in the 1998 Act. Nearly two years after the statutory deadline had passed, and after repeated assurances from the agency that plan was nearly complete, the agency submitted a list of potential options rather than a plan that chose between options. The Subcommittee had long been aware of the potential options and a further recitation of those options was not productive or helpful. I look forward to NOAA ultimately producing an acceptable long range plan.

Ninety-eight percent of the cargo in the United States international trade moves by water. Without up-to-date navigation services, that trade is neither as safe nor as effective as it could be. Therefore, I look forward to hearing our witnesses explain this morning, what improvements are still needed to the our navigation services programs, and how to achieve those improvements.

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